

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 158  
By Southerland

A RESOLUTION to recognize and commend Evelyn Bryan "Mama Bird" Johnson, a friend, proponent, and icon, for her great spirit and her service to aviation.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this legislative body should honor and recognize those citizens who in their years of work and public service have performed with uncommon devotion and enthusiasm; and

WHEREAS, Evelyn Bryan "Mama Bird" Johnson is one such estimable person who has labored honorably, sharing her love of flying and her teaching skills to enable others' exploration of the extraordinary world above; and

WHEREAS, a native of Corbin, Kentucky, Evelyn married W.J. during the 1930's after graduating from the University of Tennessee where she earned a degree in English; and

WHEREAS, after marrying, the couple moved to Jefferson City to operate a dry-cleaning business until Mr. Bryan was sent to serve on an air base in Florida during World War II; and

WHEREAS, upon seeing an advertisement in the Sunday newspaper, Mrs. Johnson decided to take up flying as a cure for her boredom; not adverse to adventure, she rode a train, bus, and a rowboat to her first flying lesson where she experienced "love at first flight"; and

WHEREAS, she became resolutely committed to developing her flying abilities and has never looked back; in an era when few women operated cars, much less planes, she learned to fly a single-engine "high-wing" Piper J3-Cub, and soon mastered seaplanes, multiengine planes, helicopters, and transports; and

WHEREAS, she shared her passion for flying with her first husband W. J. Bryan, who passed away in 1963, and her second husband, Morgan Johnson, who passed away in 1977;

during her illustrious career, she flew and taught for the Federal Aviation Administration and, was a transcontinental racer and a longtime member of the Civil Air Patrol, and

WHEREAS, having operated a flying service for twenty years and managed the Morristown Moore-Murrell Airport for more than fifty years, she has not only trained pilots but has also ferried sightseers, passengers, and cargo around the country and even to South America; and

WHEREAS, in her many years of flying this extraordinary woman has endured many trying times and handled each difficult situation with unruffled confidence; and

WHEREAS, she has weathered two complete engine failures without so much as scratching either plane, ably landed after a fire in the air, and masterfully navigated twenty-two miles in the “woolly part of Texas” when her Navajo swallowed a valve; and

WHEREAS, in 1958, having fearlessly crawled into the wreckage of a just-downed helicopter at the Morristown Airport, she turned off the engine, and pulled the pilot to safety, thereby saving his life; for her bravery, she was duly honored and recognized with a prestigious Carnegie Foundation Award; and

WHEREAS, Evelyn Johnson has been inducted into a great number of Halls of Fame, including the Tennessee Aviation Hall of Fame, the Kentucky Aviation Hall of Fame, the Instructor Hall of Fame, not to mention the Guinness Book of World Records for being the female pilot with the most hours logged in the air; and

WHEREAS, regarded as “one of the greatest teachers that aviation has ever known,” she has taught more than 3,000 student pilots, certified more than 9,000 pilots, and flown an estimated 5.5 million miles in her sixty-year career; and

WHEREAS, witnessing her drive and industriousness, Mrs. Johnson’s students, following a course which their teacher so determinedly modeled for them, have also benefited from her example to achieve success; and

WHEREAS, having performed her duties with the utmost skill, dedication, and professionalism, “Mama Bird” and can only be categorized as an outstanding citizen and her many achievements are attributable to her reliance on the time-honored values of hard work and steadfast conviction; and

WHEREAS, Evelyn Bryan “Mama Bird” Johnson is a superb individual who has exemplified outstanding determination and tenacity in her pursuit of achieving personal and professional excellence; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor and commend Evelyn Bryan “Mama Bird” Johnson, a highly respected, admired, and prized icon of the aviation industry who has served as an exemplary role model for women, aspiring pilots, and indeed all Tennesseans who face adversity with courage and pursue their dreams without restraint, and we extend to her our best wishes for every future success.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.